

## Then He entered Jerusalem...

Ottawa Mennonite Church  
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Scripture: *Mark 11:1-11*



### Six Empty Cigarette Tubes

This last week I spent some time on the family farm. This was the first time I visited the farm since my grandfather passed away. After helping my grandmother around the house I asked her if I could wander about the farm and the barns. I wanted to look at it one more time.

As I walked through the farm I was acutely aware of how these spaces had changed over time. The garden was not quite ready yet, but the land had been tilled. It was waiting for seeds to be sown, waiting for tomatoes, onions and peppers to be planted. In the vineyard most of the grape vines were pruned, waiting for the right time to be tied, just when the sap begins to run. The grass between the rows still needed to be mowed, but the flowers were just beginning to come up, signalling the beginning of spring.

I walked into the barn which housed the tractors, and the trucks. As I stood there, I listened to the wind blowing through the barn, rattling doors and windows, a sound almost amplified because of the silence. I was reminded how alive this space used to be. The doors that were usually open were closed now, shutting out the light. I remembered all the projects that were usually on the go. I walked past one of his many work benches; I looked upon his last completed project, a collapsible welding table, something he was particularly proud of, something that he no doubt looked forward to using. I walked past the tractor that he was working on the day he passed away. I was impressed with the craftsmanship and surprised with how close he was to completing his project.

I entered the second barn that held his smaller projects, and his workshop. I moved past the 4x4 which he needed to use when traveling to the back of the farm. I walked past the old car, past the drawers and drawers of tools. I smelt the air. The faint smell of engine oil, mixed with old, aging wood, and the scent of a hard worked earth. I noticed in the corner the badminton rackets I played with as a child, and the fishing rods which we used to catch fish and crayfish in the pond out back. And then I walked into his workshop.

I could remember him working in this shop. I could remember US working in this shop. It was in this shop where as a child I built bookshelves out of old drawers. It was in this shop that he created little treasures and it was in this shop where I noticed them.

Six very small, simple items, items that on their own would be meaningless to any other person, but to one who knew my grandfather, it evoked strong memories of this man. They were six empty cigarette tubes, waiting, and ready to be filled smoking tobacco. They were there just as he left them. I could

remember the feel of his rough, farmer's hands over my small, tiny, soft, city hands, guiding me as I tried to mimic his motions; memories of sitting on his lap and helping him. These six paper tubes were waiting for him to return and attend to them. Perhaps once he finished tightening that last bolt he was going to make up a couple more cigarettes for himself. Or maybe it was just before he would go in for dinner. I will never know, but it was those six empty cigarette tubes that reminded me of him; and it reminded me that he is with God now.



### Looking Around

For many of us, today is a day of celebration. Today is a day filled with ceremony, pomp and circumstance, today is a day to shout 'Hosanna', to wave palms, to lay our cloaks on the ground as Jesus comes into the city of Jerusalem on a humble donkey.

But Mark's gospel adds a verse that tends to be over looked. It is the last verse of this morning's scripture. (Mark 11:11) "Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve."

I think I can imagine what this might have looked like.

"After sending for the colt. After the procession. After the palms. After the cloak-strewn road. After the hosannas. After blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. *After it all.*

After all this, Mark—alone of all the gospels—tells us that Jesus goes into the temple and looks around at everything.

He does not teach. He does not preach. He does not heal. He does not confront or challenge. He does not even speak; neither does he cross the path of anyone who requires his attention."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus enters the temple, and stops and simply looks around. He pauses and takes stock. He stands in the silence, and in the space. This place, this space, the temple, it holds valuable memories for Jesus and for the Jewish people.

### In this place, in this space...

It is in this place that much has happened; the story of the Jewish people is within this place, the story of Jesus is in this place.

It is in this place that Jesus was brought as an infant, so that the rituals which take place forty days after a birth could take place.

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Richardson, *Palm Sunday: The Temple by Night*. (<http://paintedprayerbook.com/2009/03/29/palm-sunday-the-temple-by-night/>)

It is this place where Jesus remained after his family had left to go home following a Passover celebration; causing his parents to return and frantically look for him, only to find him sitting with the teachers debating the Holy Scriptures with them.

It is the pinnacle of this place where Matthew tells us that Jesus was taken by Satan, prodding Jesus to jump, so that angels may catch him, and his divinity may be revealed to all.

It is this place where Jesus, in John's gospels, teaches about freedom, about eternal life, about being the river of life and about being the light of the world.

It is in this place where in the next week Jesus will return time and again.

It will be in this place that Jesus will turn over the tables. It is in this place where Jesus will scold the people for turning this house of prayer into a den of thieves. It is in this place where a blind man will have his sight returned. It is in this place where a fig tree will be cursed. It is in this place where Jesus will watch a widow drop two coins into the offering box. It is in this place where Jesus will teach, perform miracles, and where Jesus will provoke the religious leaders. In this place where much still needs to happen.

### **But for now...**

United Methodist Minister and blogger Jan Richardson writes:

"But for now, for tonight, in this holy place at the heart of his people, Jesus merely looks. He peers into this sacred space that is inhabited and haunted by his own story. And perhaps it is this story he sees again this night.

Perhaps he sees Mary and Joseph coming out of the shadows, carrying their infant son.

Perhaps he sees Simeon gathering his young self into his arms, singing about salvation and a light for revelation, joined by the old prophet Anna, who raises her voice in praise.

Perhaps Jesus sees again the twelve-year-old conversing and debating with the teachers.

Perhaps Jesus sees his parents rushing in, distraught from searching, and jubilant in finding him.

Perhaps Jesus sees the tempter who tried to lure him to fling himself from the pinnacle of this place.

Perhaps Jesus sees the faces of those he has taught and healed, throughout his three years of ministry.

And perhaps in this place, where Jesus is alone-but-not-alone, they gather about him, reminding him why he has come, calling him to remember, offering their blessing for the days ahead. Perhaps in this space, after the palms and before the passion, Jesus is able simply to pause. To remember. To breathe. To be between."<sup>2</sup>

### **Soon...**

We are in a time of in between.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

We are in between Jesus' Triumphal Entry and Jesus' Crucifixion.

We are in between this celebration of Jesus' kingship, and his shameful, scandalous, criminal death.

We are in between the donkey and the cross, palms and the nails, gate and the tomb.

In this between time we ponder what has happened and what is to come.

Soon it will be dark, whether we are ready or not, we walk out and return to the twelve. The parade is over and we are on our way forward. We know where this week is going to take us.

The cheers will be turned to jeers. The warm palms will be turned to coarse cold metal nails. The donkey will be replaced with a wooden cross. The open gate will be turned to a closed tomb and the followers will scatter. For soon it will be Friday, but there is hope.

For Sunday is on its way.

On Sunday the women will discover the stone rolled away.

On Sunday the tomb will be revealed as empty

On Sunday the cloak will be neatly folded

On Sunday the young man in the white robe will address them.

On Sunday the eleven will be told.

But it is not Sunday, and it is not yet Friday. It is the evening. All is quiet, and Jesus is alone-but-not-alone. He stands, remembering his story, just as I stood on the farm remembering the shared story of my grandfather and I. Soon Jesus will leave and return to the twelve, they will eat, and rest; and tomorrow Jesus will return to the temple, prepared for the week ahead.

May God be with you during this Holy Week, as we move towards the cross of Christ.

Amen